



JAMIE RASKIN
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
8TH DISTRICT, MARYLAND

October 5, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As the Representative whose House District includes Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, I write to express grave concerns that I have about some recent actions of yours endangering the health and lives of both Walter Reed staff and Secret Service agents assigned to protect you. While I continue to send you and the First Lady all best wishes for a comprehensive recovery from COVID-19, I simply cannot overlook the cavalier recklessness that you continue to exhibit towards this deadly infectious disease and the imperiled health of our frontline providers and the American people, the vast majority of whom do not enjoy all-paid 24-7 medical and nursing attention by large teams of physicians and nurses, free helicopter transportation, and prescription drugs delivered to their bedrooms.

Your drive-by photo-op outside of the medical facility on Sunday shocked the nation because it was completely unnecessary. It needlessly exposed several Secret Service agents to the virus as you remain in the highly infectious and transmissible period of the disease. You also stated in your announcement video that you visited “the Soldiers and first responders”¹ at Walter Reed, while you were obviously still contagious with COVID-19. Your spokesperson claimed that “appropriate precautions were taken” and that your trip was “cleared by the medical team as safe to do.”² I respectfully ask: what specific medical protocols did you observe to protect Walter Reed staff, your own Secret Service agents, and all involved personnel from being infected by you, and who are the aforementioned medical staff that determined that this totally unnecessary trip was safe and a good idea?

Numerous public health experts and medical professionals have expressed grave concerns and indeed disbelief about your decision to risk exposing healthy staff to COVID-19 while you are still well-within the period of active disease transmission. An attending physician at Walter

¹ <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1312864232711520257?s=20>

² https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/trump-covid-19-updates-sunday/https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/trump-covid-19-updates-sunday/h_8b53878cf6036d39628a670944a64afdh_8b53878cf6036d39628a670944a64afd

Reed pointed out that being inside an enclosed vehicle with an infected person increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission for everyone riding in the vehicle.³

Your actions seem to collide with the public health guidance issued by your own Administration, including the infection control guidelines published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which urge health care providers to limit the “transport and movement of the patient outside of the room to medically essential purposes.”⁴ The CDC also recommends keeping infected patients in well-ventilated spaces and ensuring physical distancing of six or more feet to prevent coronavirus transmission. Your photo-op makes evident that you were neither six feet away from other people nor in a well-ventilated area. It is worth noting that First Lady Melania Trump refused to leave quarantine at the White House so as not to “expose the agents who would drive her there and the medical staff who would walk her up to [you].”⁵

The First Lady should be commended for her recognition that Secret Service agents are forced to endure substantial personal risks as a matter of course and should not be subjected to additional unnecessary health dangers. Meantime, dozens of Secret Service agents assigned to protect your safety have already contracted the virus while protecting you at public events⁶ that you have chosen to attend without a mask on, setting an appalling example for your supporters, Cabinet officers, staff and other audiences. Your Rose Garden celebration for your Supreme Court nominee appears to have been a nightmarish super-spreader event that violated nearly every public health recommendation on group events and will be responsible ultimately for dozens if not hundreds of infectious transmissions.

While you were hospitalized with COVID-19 yesterday, you stated: “It’s been a very interesting journey. I learned a lot about Covid. I learned it by really going to school...and I get it...I understand it.”⁷ Eight months into this deadly pandemic and resulting economic collapse, with nearly 210,000 Americans lives lost to this disease, I fervently do hope that your personal experience will finally motivate you to take COVID-19 seriously and listen carefully to the advice of your scientific and medical experts. Even without your dreadful personal experience, the fact that America leads the world in death count and case count from COVID-19 should be enough to convince you that your casual indifference to the staggering casualties we have suffered (“it is what it is”) and your derisive attitude about masks constitute a severe threat to public health. But, alas, your actions over the weekend raise profound questions about your judgment and suggest that you still fail to appreciate the dangers of this infectious and deadly disease and how it is transmitted.

Thus, I ask that you provide in specific detail what protocols you took in line with public health guidance, to protect the staff at Walter Reed, the Secret Service agents, and all other personnel involved, during your motorcade drive-by event, as well as the names and titles of the

³ https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/trump-covid-19-updates-sunday/h_7b959216e252d00d3ee6b306c0585a32

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html>

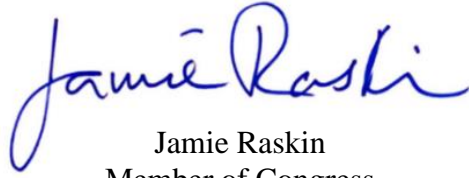
⁵ <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/trump-criticized-medical-experts-after-leaving-hospital-drive-supporters-n1242081>

⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/secret-service-copes-with-coronavirus-cases-in-aftermath-of-trump-appearances/2020/08/28/fa0e7b6e-e22a-11ea-8dd2-d07812bf00f7_story.html

⁷ <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1312864232711520257>, 0:53

individuals on your medical team who cleared these actions as “safe.” I look forward to your response.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jamie Raskin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jamie" and last name "Raskin" clearly legible.

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress